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AUTHOR Authier, Charlene; Hodges, Jilda; Srebro, Karen; Chambliss, Catherine

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ABSTRACT

Seventy-two nonsmoker and four smoker college faculty/staff members and 160 nonsmoker and 52 smoker college students from a small liberal arts college in a suburban area in the Northeast United States completed a 15-item survey concerning views of smoking. Participants were asked to rate "when you watch someone else smoke, how do they appear?" on the following dimensions: inadequate, relaxed, anxious, physically fit, alert, energized, jittery, confident, inconsiderate, attractive, sophisticated, secure, immature, content, and intelligent. Significant generation main effects were found on 10 of the 15 characteristic dimensions. On all of these variables, faculty/staff perceptions were more critical than student perceptions. Significant smoking history main effects were found on several variables. Ratings of perceived alertness, confidence, and physical fitness revealed former smokers to be more critical of smokers than those who had never smoked. In contrast, former smokers were less critical when evaluating the dimensions of anxiety, adequacy, jitteriness, and consideration of smokers. Significant generation by smoking status interactions were observed on three variables. On ratings of smokers' alertness and physical fitness, the faculty who had never smoked were more critical than their former smoking peers, whereas the most critical of all groups were those students who had quit smoking. This pattern was reversed for perceptions of smokers' maturity, for which former smoker faculty and those students who had never smoked were more critical than their respective peers. (Contains 4 tables and 19 references.) (MKA)

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Faculty and Student Views of College Student Smokers

Charlene Authier

Jilda Hodges

Karen Srebro

Catherine Chambliss, Ph.D.

Ursinus College

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Introduction

Smoking among college students is alarmingly on the rise. Through the annual Monitoring the Future Study, a national sample of high school students were surveyed on their smoking behavior, with a small sample being followed into college (Johnston et al., 1996). Johnson et al. discovered that while college student smoking remained stable from 1986 through 1990, a constant increase occurred throughout the 1990s. In order to obtain data from a larger sample, Wechsler, Rigotti, Glendill-Hoyt, and Lee (1998) investigated responses from students at 116 colleges who completed the College Alcohol Survey in 1993 and again in 1997. Overall, a 28% increase was reported between 1993 and 1997; in 99 of the schools, a higher percentage of students smoked in 1997 (Wechsler, et al., 1998).

This increasing use of cigarettes among this highly intelligent group of young adults seems paradoxical, given the apparent growing unanimity among the highly educated that smoking is a dangerous, foolish choice. Understanding the current attitude towards smoking on college campuses may help shed light on why there has been a resurgence of smoking on campuses. In addition, information about how smokers are viewed by their peers and college faculty may assist students in making the most responsible decisions regarding smoking.

College students' reasons for smoking may be different from those underlying both early adolescents' and older adults' smoking. However, relatively little research has focused specifically upon those who initiated smoking during their college years. Past research has delineated several differences between young adolescents' smoking and

adults' smoking. In adolescence, social motives are the primary source of smoking initiation; this behavior is frequently begun to project an image of toughness, sociability, precociousness, and extroversion (Chassin, Presson, & Sherman, 1990). According to Moore (1998), young people commonly smoke in order to look mature or attractive, to keep slim, or to feel independent. Additionally, most children between the ages of 12 and 14 who smoke regularly say all or most of their friends smoke, and a third of pupils agree it is hard not to smoke if most of your friends do (Moore, 1998). For adolescent smokers, social factors have been found to be highly important, indicating that the social benefits accompanying this behavior possibly outweigh the health risks (Leventhal & Cleary, 1980). Smoking may be initiated if adolescents believe they will be perceived as sophisticated, attractive, and/or socially successful by their peers (Barton et al., 1982). Early adolescents may begin smoking if it is deemed desirable by peers, because this developmental period is a time of preoccupation with social image (Barton, et al.,1982). A previous study, using adolescents, found that educational failure, toughness, and precocity were associated with smoking; male subjects especially valued toughness and precocity (McKennell & Bynner, 1969).

In contrast, adult smokers, have been found to be less socially connected and more depressed (Anda, et al., 1990; Glassman, et al., 1988, 1990; Hemenway, Solnick, & Colditz, 1993). Social desirability of smoking seems to have little influence on the adult. Chassin et al. (1990) discovered that stress management and reduction of negative affect contribute significantly to adults' continuance of smoking. Smoking behavior may additionally serve as a means of self-medication for depression and a way to enhance pleasurable relaxation (Clausen, 1987; Gilbert, 1979).

In addition to the aforementioned factors, various demographic variables are associated with smoking behavior. Those with lower levels of education and lower socioeconomic status are more likely to smoke. In a study by Stronks et al. (1997), a questionnaire regarding smoking habits and socioeconomic status was mailed to a random sample of adults in the Netherlands. Participants were asked questions regarding financial problems, family income, and highest educational level obtained. Current smokers generally were in the lower income brackets and suffered more financial problems (Stronks, et al., 1997). These researchers found that 20% of people from the highest educational group reported smoking, versus 50% of participants from the lowest educational group. Fewer former smokers were found among the lower educational levels, possibly indicating less desire to quit among this subset of the population. Stronks et al. (1997) found it was five times more likely for smokers to have only achieved a primary education rather than fulfilling a college-level education when compared with never smokers.

Research indicating a recent upsurge in college students' smoking is at odds with many of these earlier findings. This suggests that the factors underlying smoking in today's college students may be quite different from those previously delineated by researchers investigating younger and older populations. Additional research focusing on the specific features of this particular age group seems warranted. Until the reasons for college students' smoking are better understood, efforts must be made to inform young adults about the full range of risks associated with cigarette use. The health risks of smoking have been widely discussed; it is unlikely that any college student has escaped the vehement warnings about the physical dangers of smoking. However, another set of

risks has not yet been widely considered. These involve ways in which smoking can affect the reputation of the student, and possibly tarnish how they are regarded on campus both by peers and faculty, and by prospective employers. In recent years, as general attitudes towards smoking have grown more negative, there has been increasing evidence of discrimination against smokers in many venues. Understanding the risks of such negative stereotyping on campus may allow students to make more informed choices about whether or not to smoke, and whether or not to do so publicly.

Since many nonsmokers hold negative attitudes towards smoking and because more and more of the older adult population do not smoke or are reducing nicotine intake, there may be increasing bias against hiring smokers. Smokers at some of London's high profile banks and offices are being discouraged from lighting up outside their work places following management claims that they are "blighting their companies' image" (Chaudhary, 1997). The Washington State Department of Personnel is currently investigating the legality of their planned policy to refuse to hire smokers for all forms of state employment. In 1999, Ralph Munro, Washington State's Secretary of State, endorsed a proposal to allow state agencies to reject job applicants who smoke. Dennis Karras, director of the department, cites court cases in North Miami and Oklahoma City that have supported municipal governments that actively discouraged smoking (Kelley, 1999). In discussing cases of hiring discrimination, Kelley reports the case of a county auditor in Thurston county who posts job opening signs stating that hiring preference will be given to nonsmokers. Citing psychological research showing that smokers are more impulsive, some argue that this group may make less dependable employees (Sixel,

1998). This kind of negative stereotyping may hamper college student smokers' success in seeking employment.

Since many college students are understandably focused on their future occupational options, and invest considerable energy working to ensure their later professional success, they should know if their smoking prevalence might compromise their careers. Understanding how teachers view smoking may also be helpful to college students. Since smoking prevalence is low among members of the teaching profession (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1985, Garfinkel, 1997); it seems likely that they may see smoking in a negative light. If college smokers are generally viewed unfavorably by faculty members, the decision to smoke cigarettes may compromise some students' chances for later success, by adversely affecting the mentoring experience they enjoy during their undergraduate years. The choice to smoke in public settings shared by professors, supervisors, and others in an evaluative role, may be particularly disadvantageous. If negative stereotypes of smokers prevail, the desire to avoid the impact of this bias might be a powerful reason for many students to refrain from smoking, or barring that, to confine their smoking to private settings. This study will help to clarify the extent to which these negative attitudes characterize campuses today.

Methods

Participants

Respondents were 72 nonsmoker and 4 smoker college faculty/staff members and 160 nonsmoker and 52 smoker college students from a small liberal arts college from a suburban area in the Northeast United States.

Survey Instrument

The four-page survey, completed by students, consisted of items pertaining to perceptions of smokers. Questions regarding smoking history were used to determine smoking status (never, former, or current).

Faculty and staff completed a shortened version of the original survey (abbreviated to maximize rate of return). Items regarding the respondent's smoking status and perceptions of college student smokers were identical to those found in the four-page survey.

Perceptions of smokers were assessed through 15 Likert-format items (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Often, and 4=Very Frequently). Participants were asked to rate "When you watch someone else smoke, how do they appear?" on the following dimensions: inadequate, relaxed, anxious, physically fit, alert, energized, jittery, confident, inconsiderate, attractive, sophisticated, secure, immature, content, and intelligent.

Procedure

Students from introductory and upper-level courses volunteered to complete the four-page survey anonymously. Faculty/staff were sent the one-page survey through campus mail. Those completing the anonymous survey returned the survey to a student researcher through campus mail. Due to the low number of current smokers among the faculty/staff, only nonsmokers were used in subsequent analysis.

Results

Generation and smoking status effects were assessed using 2x2 ANOVA (faculty/staff versus student and never versus former smoker) performed on the fifteen

college student smoker characteristic items. Ratings of the target smoker characteristics were directionally adjusted so that higher scores indicated more positive views.

Significant generation main effects were found on ten of the fifteen smoker characteristic dimensions (perceived smoker anxiety, confidence, contentment, maturity, adequacy, jitteriness, consideration, relaxation, security, and sophistication). On all of these variables, faculty/staff perceptions were more critical than student perceptions (see Table A and B).

Significant smoking history main effects were found on several variables. Ratings of perceived alertness, confidence, and physical fitness revealed former smokers to be more critical of smokers than those who had never smoked. In contrast, former smokers were less critical when evaluating the dimensions of anxiety, adequacy, jitteriness, and consideration of smokers (see Table B and C).

Significant generation by smoking status interactions were observed on three variables. On ratings of smokers' alertness and physical fitness, the faculty who had never smoked were more critical than their former smoker peers, while the most critical of all groups were those students who had quit smoking. This pattern was reversed for perceptions of smokers' maturity, where former smoker faculty and those students who had never smoked were more critical than their respective peers (see Table D).

Discussion

As hypothesized, members of the older generation viewed college students who smoke more negatively than did their younger counterparts. On the majority of dimensions investigated, faculty/staff perceptions of smokers were more harshly critical

than the perceptions of the smokers' fellow students. Awareness of this bias on the part of the faculty might influence college students' decision to smoke.

Former smokers (students and faculty/staff combined) were not consistently sympathetic to smokers relative to those who had never smoked, although they did view college smokers as less inconsiderate, and were less likely to see smokers as anxious, inadequate, and jittery. It appeared that faculty and staff who had never smoked were more likely to blame smokers for their behavior and to construe it as a thoughtless encroachment on the rights of others. Those who never smoked also seemed more apt to cast smokers in a pathological light. In contrast, former smokers were more critical in evaluating smokers' lack of confidence, poor physical fitness, and low level of alertness.

When the significant interactions are considered, it becomes clear that the aforementioned finding was largely attributable to the tendency among students who had quit smoking to espouse especially harsh attitudes toward smokers regarding physical fitness and alertness. In order to justify their decision to stop smoking, they may need to magnify the differences between themselves and students who continue to smoke. Interestingly, these former smoker students were least condemning of their smoking peers' in terms of their evaluation of smokers' maturity. On the maturity dimension, faculty who had quit smoking were more highly critical, perhaps because they equate their own smoking with an immature period in their lives. Students who had never smoked also viewed college smokers as quite immature, possibly because they assume those who smoke do so because they have succumbed to peer pressure.

Given the findings that show the prevalence of negative stereotypes of smokers among faculty, future research should examine whether these attitudes ever bias the

education process. It may be a disadvantage for college students who smoke to do so publicly on campus.

Table A

Generation Descriptives

Variable	Generation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adequate	Student	160	2.70	1.18
*(Inadequate)	Faculty/staff	72	1.81	1.81
Alert	Student	160	1.94	.84
	Faculty/staff	72	1.94	.98
Attractive	Student	160	1.44	.77
	Faculty/staff	72	1.26	.61
Confident	Student	160	2.03	.93
	Faculty/staff	72	1.76	.91
Considerate	Student	160	2.54	1.12
*(Inconsiderate)	Faculty/staff	72	1.83	.92
Content	Student	160	2.18	.99
	Faculty/staff	72	1.69	.90
Energized	Student	160	1.76	.76
	Faculty/staff	72	1.74	.89
Intelligent	Student	160	1.55	.77
	Faculty/staff	72	1.40	.85
Mature	Student	160	2.55	1.07
*(Immature)	Faculty/staff	72	1.68	.92
Not anxious	Student	160	2.42	1.08

*(Anxious)	Faculty/staff	72	1.90	.77
Not jittery	Student	160	2.51	1.01
*(Jittery)	Faculty/staff	72	1.89	.85
Physically fit	Student	160	1.61	.79
	Faculty/staff	72	1.64	.88
Relaxed	Student	160	2.39	1.00
	Faculty/staff	72	2.07	.83
Secure	Student	160	1.86	.89
	Faculty/staff	72	1.54	.82
Sophisticated	Student	160	1.44	.77
	Faculty/staff	72	1.22	.59

* These variables were directionally adjusted.

TABLE B

2x2 (Generation x Smoking History) ANOVA

Dependent variable: Adequacy *(Inadequate)

Source	F	P
Generation	28.16	>.001
Smoking History	4.49	.04
Generation x Smoking History	1.39	.24

Dependent variable: Alertness

Source	F	P
Generation	.001	.98
Smoking History	4.04	.05
Generation x Smoking History	8.41	>.01

Dependent variable: Attractiveness

Source	F	P
Generation	3.05	.08
Smoking History	.07	.80
Generation x Smoking History	.49	.48

Dependent variable: Confident

Source	F	P
Generation	4.61	.03
Smoking History	5.36	.02
Generation x Smoking History	.50	.48

Dependent variable: Considerate *(Inconsiderate)

Source	F	P
Generation	22.00	>.001
Smoking History	3.77	.05
Generation x Smoking History	.79	.38

Dependent variable: Contentment

Source	F	P
Generation	12.87	<.001
Smoking History	.23	.63
Generation x Smoking History	1.38	.24

Dependent variable: Energized

Source	F	P
Generation	.08	.78
Smoking History	1.64	.20
Generation x Smoking History	3.58	.06

Dependent variable: Intelligent

Source	F	P
Generation	1.97	.16
Smoking History	1.87	.17
Generation x Smoking History	1.74	.19

Dependent variable: Mature *(Immature)

Source	F	P
Generation	36.15	>.001
Smoking History	.93	.36
Generation x Smoking History	4.24	.04

Dependent variable: Not Anxious *(Anxious)

Source	F	P
Generation	13.43	>.001

Smoking History	9.40	>.001
Generation x Smoking History	.25	.62

Dependent variable: Not Jittery *(Jittery)

Source	F	P
Generation	20.64	>.001
Smoking History	4.11	.04
Generation x Smoking History	.70	.40

Dependent variable: Physically fit

Source	F	P
Generation	.04	.84
Smoking History	5.41	.02
Generation x Smoking History	13.39	<.001

Dependent variable: Relaxed

Source	F	P
Generation	5.49	.02
Smoking History	.73	.39
Generation x Smoking	2.09	.15

History		

Dependent variable: Secure

Source	F	P
Generation	7.42	<.01
Smoking History	3.29	.07
Generation x Smoking History	3.35	.07

Dependent variable: Sophisticated

Source	F	P
Generation	4.32	.04
Smoking History	.32	.57
Generation x Smoking History	.41	.52

Table C

Smoking History Descriptives

Variable	Smoking History	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adequate	Never	114	2.19	1.11
*(Inadequate)	Ever	118	2.64	1.35
Alert	Never	114	2.13	.80
	Ever	118	1.75	.92
Attractive	Never	114	1.39	.70
	Ever	118	1.39	.75
Confident	Never	114	2.11	.86
	Ever	118	1.79	.97
Considerate	Never	114	2.14	.96
*(Inconsiderate)	Ever	118	2.50	1.22
Content	Never	114	2.09	.93
	Ever	118	1.97	1.04
Energized	Never	114	1.87	.71
	Ever	118	1.64	.87
Intelligent	Never	114	1.61	.80
	Ever	118	1.41	.79
Mature	Never	114	2.14	.90
*(Immature)	Ever	118	2.42	1.25
Not anxious	Never	114	2.03	.90
*(Anxious)	Ever	118	2.49	1.09

Not jittery	Never	114	2.15	.90
*(Jittery)	Ever	118	2.48	1.07
Physically Fit	Never	114	1.82	.84
	Ever	118	1.42	.74
Relaxed	Never	114	2.26	.96
	Ever	118	2.31	.96
Secure	Never	114	1.91	.85
	Ever	118	1.62	.89
Sophisticated	Never	114	1.35	.65
	Ever	118	1.39	.80

Table D

Interaction Descriptives

Alertness

Status	Smoking Status	Never	Former
Student		M=2.25	M=1.65
Faculty/staff		M=1.89	M=2.00

Physical fitness

Status	Smoking Status	Never	Former
Student		M=1.95	M=1.29
Faculty/staff		M=1.57	M=1.71

Maturity

Status	Smoking Status	Never	Former
Student		M=2.32	M=2.76
Faculty/staff		M=1.76	M=1.60

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